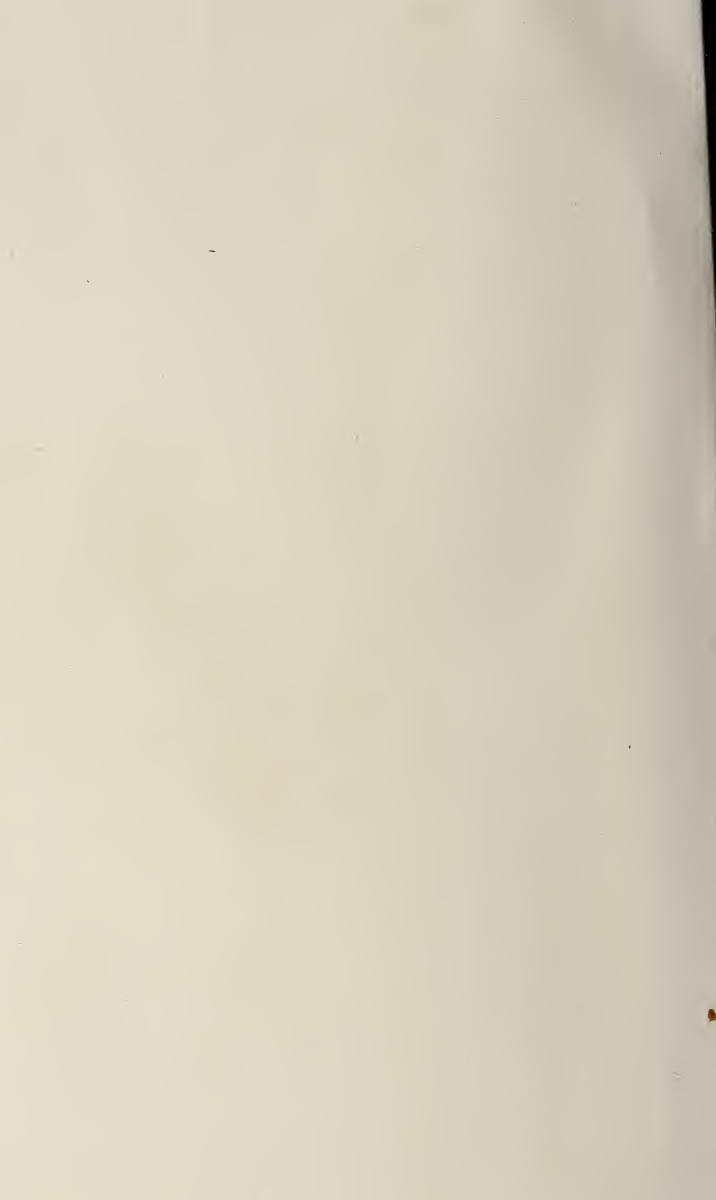


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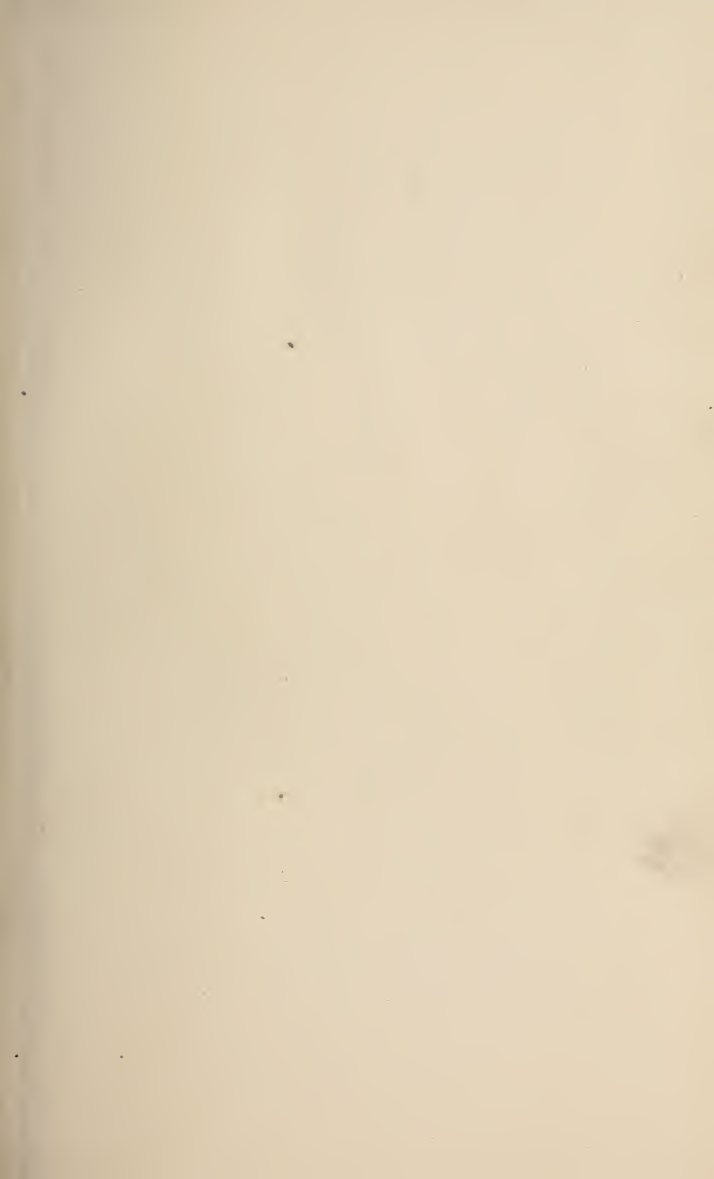


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Am I a Child of God?—Frontispiece.



“Do you think, Sammy, that you have been born again?”

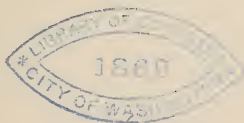
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AM I A CHILD OF GOD?

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A MANUAL FOR

Professors and Non-Professors.



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PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS little book is warmly recommended for circulation among all classes. It is a vigorous exposition of the great principles of evangelical religion; and it is admirably calculated to arouse the careless, undeceive the self-righteous, reclaim the backslider, and comfort the sincere.

AM I A CHILD OF GOD?

THE QUESTION ASKED.

AM I A CHILD OF GOD? If you are a child of God, then you are an heir of glory, and heaven will be your home after death. If you are not, then you are a child of perdition, and exposed to the danger of being driven away with the wicked in their wickedness.

Persons who become deeply interested on the subject of their souls' salvation are always anxious to know in what conversion consists, and how they can tell when their sins are pardoned. A

correct understanding of this subject is of vast importance; for it is a want of this that leads into the church great numbers who have not truly turned from their sins unto God. I do not believe that there are very many downright hypocrites in the church,—persons who have made a profession of religion for the purpose of furthering some evil end. Most unconverted professors are undoubtedly self-deceived. Their views of the plan of salvation are not clear, and they do not properly understand what constitutes the new heart.

And among those who give real evidences of piety there is often found great confusion and darkness in their views on the subject of a change of heart, so that they are troubled with doubts and a fear of death. They have no settled peace, and go all their days

carrying a heavy burden in their souls. Passages of Scripture designed to arouse the formal professor give them constant alarm. They know not but at the last they may be shut out with the five foolish virgins, or bound in bundles with the tares and burned, or forever driven from the presence of the Lord with the workers of iniquity whom he knows not. In great sadness the burdened soul often sings,—

“’Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?”

There are others who know that they are not children of God: of these, some are sensible of their great danger; some, alas! “care for none of these things.” To all classes this treatise is affectionately commended.

CAN THE QUESTION BE ANSWERED?

AM I A-CHILD OF GOD? Can this question be answered this side the bar of God? Can it be so answered that I may be absolutely certain that my sins are all forgiven, and that the Holy Spirit is abiding with me, sanctifying me for glory? Troubled, anxious soul, it can! The plan of salvation is simple,—one of the simplest things in the world,—so simple that little children and “clouded intellects” may embrace it. The evidences of piety are easily understood. Learn what they are, and apply them to yourself, and your doubts will vanish. If you are a child of God, you will know it; if not, then the question will be settled that you are yet “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

REASONS FOR SETTLING THIS QUESTION WITHOUT DELAY.

1. The state of doubt is one of uncertainty to yourself. You may be saved; you may be lost. You may be an heir of glory; you may be a child of perdition. Hence, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. xiii. 5.)

2. The state of doubt is one of unhappiness. Peace and joy are your rightful portion as a Christian. "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. iv. 17.) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c. (Gal. v. 22.) Now,

peace and joy arise mainly out of the belief that we are the children of God. If you were satisfied that your sins were all forgiven, and that you have a sure title to a home in heaven, you would rejoice. So that spiritual joy must be a stranger to your breast as long as anxious doubts and fears occupy your mind.

3. The state of doubt is one that unfits you for active service in the cause of Christ. To be a useful Christian, you must be satisfied that you are a Christian. Doubts call away your mind from Christ and his work to yourself. You do not feel like asking a sinner to give his heart to Jesus, unless your own soul in confidence and love reposes in the Saviour. You cannot ask an impenitent man to accompany you to heaven, when you are not satisfied that you

yourself are travelling the narrow way of life.

4. The state of doubt is one that is displeasing to our heavenly Father. It can certainly give him no pleasure to behold his children doubting his love for them, and doubting the evidences which he gives them of their acceptance through Christ. Much less can he be pleased with such a state of mind in him who has not really been born again. The doubter has some hope that at the last he will be admitted to heaven; and, if he is not a true Christian, his very state of doubt is so far a state of false security. Hence God exhorts you to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Pet. i. 10.) He desires that every one "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith;" and "that every one of you do show the same dili-

gence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. x. 22; vi. 11.)

HOW CAN THE QUESTION BE SETTLED?

AM I A CHILD OF GOD? How can this question be settled? I answer, On the testimony of the Holy Spirit:—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 16.) If you are born of God, the Holy Spirit furnishes you with the evidence of the fact. He testifies to your adoption into God's family; so that you may feel assured that you are an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ (Rom. viii. 17).

The testimony of the Holy Spirit is a sure ground of confidence. He is "the Spirit of truth" (John xvi. 13); and he is "the Spirit that beareth witness, be-

cause the Spirit is truth" (1 John v. 6). He cannot testify to that which is false, nor would he in anywise deceive us. We always credit the testimony of good and truthful men. We receive their evidence. Now, the Holy Spirit has all knowledge; for "he searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 10.) He knows the names of all the true children of God. And he cannot bear false testimony: that would be contrary to his nature. Hence his evidence must be trustworthy: it cannot be otherwise. And it must be relied on by us; we must receive it: to doubt it is a sin. You sometimes doubt the testimony of men, for they may not have perfect knowledge of the case, or may be influenced by self-interest or prejudice; but to question the testimony of the Holy Spirit is always a sin.

I know that doubts, in multitudes of instances, arise out of a mistaken view of the nature of the testimony of the Spirit. Some persons seem to have no sort of idea as to what that testimony is; and others are looking for that which the Spirit never gives. Very many, in seeking light on this subject, look to men, and not to God; to the professed experiences of others, and not to the teachings of the Bible. But this is a dangerous course to pursue; for even well-meaning people, in a state of deep excitement, often imagine things that have no real existence. Now, the Holy Spirit not only gives us the evidence of our adoption into the family of God, but he also carefully and fully informs us in the Bible what that evidence is. We must therefore come to the word of God, and try our experience, and the

professed experiences of all others, by this touchstone of divine truth. To the law and to the testimony must be our appeal.

WHAT THE TESTIMONY OF THE SPIRIT IS NOT.

It may be well to consider here some things wherein the witness of the Spirit does not consist.

1. It is not a testimony addressed to the bodily senses. It is not something which we can hear or see or apprehend with the sense of touch. Some persons have imagined that at the time of their supposed conversion they have heard a voice speaking to them comforting words, and thus assuring them of their salvation. I have heard two different persons say that they saw bright lights. A man once told me that at the time he gave

his heart to God he had a vision of heaven. A woman, anxious about her soul's salvation, was expecting to receive some sort of sensible shock. In our depraved state, we are very much creatures of sense, and we desire a religion that addresses itself to our senses. Naaman supposed that the prophet would come forth from his chamber at the call of a Syrian nobleman, and with a great ceremony display visible manifestations of the power of the God of Israel. Hence he was greatly disappointed when the message came, "Go, and wash in Jordan seven times." We are all more or less like Naaman. The Lord is well pleased and angels do rejoice over penitent sinners. But God does not work miracles simply to gratify our vanity. These voices and lights and visions are things for which we are not to look. They

are not promised in the Bible. There is no intimation in the Scriptures that these are the witness of the Spirit. And those who think such miracles have been wrought for them are simply mistaken. Their visions were mental hallucinations, the workings of an excited or dis-tempered imagination. The witness of the Spirit, then, is not a testimony addressed to the bodily senses, or in any way to be apprehended by them.

2. The witness of the Spirit is not usually of the nature of a sudden impression coming into the soul that it is converted. This impression may be the result of the workings of that law of the mind termed the law of association. You may have heard or read some comforting verse of Scripture in the days of your impenitence. Years have passed since then. In the kind dealings of God

with you, you are brought under concern for your soul. A great burden rests on your heart. In an unexpected moment some association of ideas brings up that comforting verse. You do not remember ever to have heard it before, and your conclusion is that the Holy Spirit has spoken it to you with his still small voice.

This impression may originate in another way. During times of revival, persons often become intensely excited. Ministers frequently labour too much to produce excitement. They preach terrifying sermons, and resort to measures intended to arouse feeling. But the powers of the mind cannot remain strung up to so high a pitch. There must be a calm after every storm. If the excitement comes on suddenly, it will usually pass away suddenly. And

this change from excitement to calmness is mistaken for religious conversion. The storm has subsided, the terror is gone, and the sudden impression comes that it is all God's work. Doubtless, multitudes are deluded in just this way.

Now, with regard to these voices, and lights, and visions, and impressions, I would remark :—

1. That the Scriptures give us no warrant for expecting such things at the time of conversion. These things were not common in the days of inspiration. Jacob, indeed, had the vision of the ladder, and wrestled all night with the angel of the covenant. Paul saw a bright light shining round about him; and John had visions of heaven. The Lord appeared to Elijah by the still small voice. But even these manifestations, in so far as they were miraculous,

were not designed to attest the piety of the saints. Wicked men, such as Pharaoh, Balaam, Saul, Nebuchadnezzar, were visited by God with dreams and visions. The Scriptures nowhere intimate that such things were ever intended to constitute the witness of the Spirit, nor do Bible saints ever appeal to them as the evidence of their acceptance with God.

2. Of course the witness of the Spirit must be something which is common to all God's people. A testimony given to only one in a thousand would be of no practical benefit to the church at large.

3. The persons who profess to have enjoyed such visions are usually persons of an excitable temperament and a strong imagination. They seem naturally inclined to fanaticism, and many of them sooner or later show, by their errors of

doctrine or practice, that they are not the true children of God.

On this whole subject of the witness of the Spirit, we must be careful to ascertain just what the Bible teaches, and to discard all opinions which are not warranted by the plain declarations of God's word.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

What, then, is the witness of the Holy Spirit? I answer, It is the work which he performs in our minds and hearts, converting us to God and purifying us for glory. It is the testimony of work, and not of mere word or impression. When Jesus was baptized, the Father testified by an audible voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(Matt. iii. 17.) But the Father afterwards gave a fuller testimony in the miraculous works that Jesus was commissioned to perform; and our Saviour enforced his claims partly by this evidence:—"The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John v. 36.) These works of mercy were evidence that one sent from God had appeared in Judea to show forth his great loving-kindness among the people. So the work that the Spirit performs on our hearts is the sure evidence of his holy presence with us, and of his loving purpose to sanctify us for glory. The Lord says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) It is the Holy Spirit who gives us this new heart, and pro-

duces this new state of things within us. The new heart is his work. The Spirit is sometimes compared to a seal:—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby (*i.e.* by whom) ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv. 30; also i. 13, and 2 Cor. i. 22.) The seal makes a stamp or impression, which renders the title-deed or package or property sure for the person to whom it properly belongs. Christians belong to God, being bought with the blood of his Son; and the Holy Spirit puts a mark or stamp on their souls, which designates them as God's possession; and that mark is the image of God. The great seal of government sometimes bears the image of the king. The Holy Spirit stamps the image of God on our hearts; for we are "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created" us (Col. iii. 10). And this

seal—this image of God as the work of the Holy Spirit—is the evidence that we belong to God.

Now, this evidence is common to all God's people. The new man must be stamped upon all who enter the kingdom of heaven. No one can become a child of God without having given to him a child's heart. The children must bear the image of the Father.

Again, this evidence is simple and easily known. A new heart is something of which we can readily be conscious. Our bodily senses are one source of knowledge to us. They reveal the world without. They give us a knowledge of matter, with its properties, laws, changes, &c. Consciousness tells us of the world within. It tells us of our thoughts, our feelings, our dispositions, our purposes, and all changes in these.

Whatever work, therefore, the Holy Spirit performs on any one's heart, he may be conscious of the change brought about. Were we dependent on visions and voices, it might be difficult to distinguish the truth from our own mental hallucinations. And then the blind could not see them, and the deaf could not hear them. But all, whether old or young, whether learned or unlearned, whether possessed of the bodily senses or deprived of them, can be conscious of the new heart. Had poor Laura Bridgeman stood before Mount Sinai, she could have neither heard the rolling thunders nor seen the awful clouds and terrible flashes of lightning. But Laura Bridgeman, though she can neither see nor hear, is conscious that she has a new heart.

And then this evidence is constant

and abides with us all the time. So great are the remains of depravity within us, and so varying our frames of spirit, that we need a permanent witness to which we can daily make our appeal. Should God, at the time of our conversion, speak from heaven with an audible voice, or show us a vision, it would be only for once, and would not answer us for future days of darkness and gloom.

So that the true witness of the Spirit, given in the form of work in and upon our hearts, is the very best kind of evidence that could be furnished us of our acceptance with God.

IN WHAT WAY THE SPIRIT WORKS.

Here we must be well on our guard. We must ever bear in mind that the

Holy Spirit is a spirit without bodily parts, so that we cannot perceive his presence by any of our bodily senses. We do not hear him with our ears, nor see him with our eyes, nor feel him with our hands, nor in any manner apprehend him by the sense of touch. He is a spirit, and his work is entirely within the domain of the soul and wholly spiritual in its nature.

Now, in the great work of converting us to God and purifying our hearts, the Holy Spirit employs an instrument. God can work with or without instruments at his pleasure. By a simple exercise of power he caused Aaron's rod, laid up in the tabernacle, to blossom and bring forth fruit in a single night. Usually he produces corn and fruit for man and beast through the instrumentality of the soil and sun and refreshing showers. So

the Holy Spirit could work on human souls without the intervention of any instrument. But his usual method of operation is to employ the truth as an instrument. It is the means both of conversion and sanctification :—"For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv. 12.) But the word of God is thus quick (*i.e.* living) and powerful, because it is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. vi. 17). It is the means used to bring us to God; for "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James i. 18); so that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and

abideth forever." (1 Pet. i. 23.) And so are we also "sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 19.)

We ascertain the presence of the Holy Spirit with us, therefore, by the fact that gospel truth is performing its appropriate work in our minds and hearts. We are conscious of the incoming of certain views and feelings, brought there in connection with gospel truth. We are not directly conscious of the agency of the Spirit. If the canvas could feel, it would feel only the paint put on with the brush, and not the hand wielding the brush. If one steal noiselessly upon a blind man and wound him with a sword, the man will feel only the pain and wound made by the sword, and not the active agent employing it. So we are conscious only of certain views and feelings produced by the instrumentality of gospel

truth. Hence you must not expect to see the Spirit, or hear him, or feel him, nor even to be able to ascertain his presence by a direct act of consciousness.

HOW WE KNOW IT IS THE SPIRIT WHO WORKS IN US.

How do we know, then, that the Holy Spirit is present at all in the work of conversion and sanctification? We know it (1.) On the testimony of God. The Lord everywhere in the Bible ascribes the great work of purifying human souls to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit:—"It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." (Joel ii. 28.) "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matt. iii. 11.) "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he

cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John iii. 5.) “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove (*i.e.* convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John xvi. 8.) “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus iii. 6.) “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John iii. 6.) “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom. viii. 14.) “And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” (1 John iii. 24.) Thus, in the plainest and most unequivocal terms, does the

Lord ascribe the work of changing human hearts and fitting them to be the children of God, to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit.

2. The work is of such a character as to require the direct intervention of divine power. There are some things which the creature can do, and there are some things which finite power cannot accomplish. Human agency lies within restricted bounds. Man can to a limited degree educate and train nature; but he cannot take away from any thing its old nature and give it one that is entirely new. He can train a thornbush and somewhat improve its appearance and fruit; but he can never so transform its nature as to cause it spontaneously to bring forth the delicious apple. You may pet the tiger, and in many respects render it quite docile;

but you can never deprive it of its thirst for blood. Now, man is born with a sinful nature. This is a universal fact. No other truth is more clearly established than this one, that man comes into the world a depraved being. It is natural for him to love sin and dislike the service of God. Of course education and systems of moral training can do much. They can make a Confucius, a Socrates, a Franklin; but they can never make an Enoch, a Paul, or a Luther. They can restrain depravity; but they can never make a new creature in Christ Jesus. And the children of God are a new creation; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (*i.e.* new creation). (2 Cor. v. 17.) "For we are this workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Eph. ii. 10.) The work of changing human souls and

fitting them for glory is necessarily a divine work.

There is great comfort in this doctrine of the Bible. For if the Holy Spirit undertakes the work of preparing us for heaven, (1.) We shall be sure of an admission to the mansions in the Father's house. The Lord might well reject our work; but he will not reject the work of his own Holy Spirit. (2.) If the Spirit undertakes to fit us for glory, the work will be well done. All the Lord's works are perfect. The Spirit will eradicate every evil thing from our hearts, wash out every stain of sin, and so enlarge and ennoble our spiritual powers as to prepare us for the enjoyment of all the blessings of heaven. This doctrine, therefore, is one which is full of comfort to God's children amid the toils and sorrows of their earthly pilgrimage.

WHAT THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IS.

The Spirit of God performs a work in and upon our hearts. That work is the evidence of his presence with us, and is the witness that he bears to our spirits that we are the children of God. What, then, is the work? We usually divide it into two parts, or consider it from a twofold point of view,—viz. its beginning, and its progress. Its beginning the Bible calls the new heart, or the new birth into the kingdom of God. Its progress is the subsequent work of making the heart pure, *i.e.* sanctification.

Now, as the Spirit employs the truth in our conversion and sanctification, he is said to lead us:—"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom viii. 14; Gal. v. 18.) And most usually, I suppose,—

1. He begins his work with the impenitent by leading the soul to a thoughtful and serious consideration of its condition. Man's native depravity tends to make him not only neglectful, but even forgetful, of his soul's interests. He goes on in sin, living for the present world, unaware of his true state before God, and careless with respect to the prospects of eternity. The Lord, knowing the dreadful condition of sinners, expresses the wish, "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." (Deut. xxxii. 29.) And his compassion leads him to send to the careless sinner the messages of grace, and to accompany them with the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes "to convince the world." (John xvi. 8.) He says to the impenitent, "Come now, and let us reason

together, saith the Lord." (Isa. i. 18.) The sinner reads the word, or hears it spoken, or some providence brings to recollection words heard years gone by, and his indifference begins to pass from him. His thoughtlessness gives way to seriousness. He begins to think about his soul and its undying interests. He grows restive and uneasy. He may not know what is the matter with him. He may even try to banish his increasing anxiety, and may make special efforts to appear unusually cheerful. But the work of conviction goes on, and eventually assumes a definite shape. Hence,—

2. His thoughts and feelings are concerned about sin. Now, an impenitent man may know in some general sense that he is a sinner and that he is imperfect. But this imperfection he looks upon as a sort of natural infirmity, and

his sins as something which he cannot very well avoid. He has no correct idea of his true state before God. He would unhesitatingly reject the teachings of the Bible as to his most deplorable condition. But when his mind becomes enlightened by the truth and the Spirit of God, he then takes a very different view of himself. The Lord Jesus promised to send his Holy Spirit "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John xvi. 8.)

OF SIN.—Man is a sinner in a twofold sense,—viz. in his heart and in his life. He breaks God's laws, and with his unrenewed heart he cannot keep its precepts. Indeed the sinner does not want to keep God's law. His heart is set against it; for his "carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can

be." (Rom. viii. 7.) Now, the truly awakened sinner sees all this. He is convinced that God's account of human nature is at least true in his case. He has been sinning all his life. His transgressions are so numerous that he cannot reckon them up. And the imperfection of his heart is far more than an innocent infirmity. It is a wicked depravity which makes him love sin and dislike holiness. He is convinced especially of the great sin of unbelief. It would be unnatural in a son who has a loving and devoted father not to repose any confidence in that father, nor to love him, nor ever do any thing to please him. Our heavenly Father is a kind Father; he loves us, and supplies us with all our temporal blessings, and has given his own Son to die for us. The careless sinner lives in constant

disobedience to the commands of this Father; never does any thing to please him, reposes no confidence in him, and has no personal affection for him. No other sin, perhaps, can be greater than for a man not to love God nor repose confidence in him. The awakened sinner sees this. But this is an entirely new view of himself: he never had such in the days of his unconcern. He is now led into a conviction of sin.

OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.—Righteousness is what God's law demands. And that law demands absolute purity of heart, and perfect uprightness before God and man in the whole conduct of life. The law is a transcript of God's own nature. Hence it demands of man just what God is:—"Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. xi. 44),—holy in heart and holy in life. Now, the truly awakened sinner

sees his need of this twofold righteousness. He has it not; he is utterly destitute of it. In his days of thoughtlessness he regarded himself as very good. He was not perfect; but yet he was honest, and sometimes gave to the poor, and was about as good as most members of the church. But now he is fully convinced that his fancied righteousness is a covering of filthy rags. He has no true holiness of either heart or life. He is convinced of his utter destitution of it. And yet that is what he must have, or he can never again be happy; that is what he must have, or he will be shut out of heaven. He is convinced of righteousness.

OF JUDGMENT.—God sits in judgment on the state and conduct of men both here and hereafter, and justly condemns them for their sins:—"He that believeth

not is condemned already." (John iii. 18.) Sin deserves to be punished. The man who violates civil law ought to suffer the penalty of that law. The thief ought to be imprisoned and the murderer hanged. So those who violate God's law ought to suffer for it. And those who have depraved natures ought not to be admitted into the holy society of heaven. God does not want any children there unless they have hearts to repose confidence in him, and love him, and obey him. Hence God must sit in judgment on sinners, and condemn them to death for their transgressions and to banishment from heaven for their depravity. Now, the careless sinner does not see this. He does not believe that he ought to suffer the penalty of God's law for his foibles, or be banished from heaven for his infirmities. But the truly

awakened sinner does feel this. His conscience condemns him, and forces him to confess the justice of God's sentence against sin. He feels that it is right for God to sit in judgment on him and condemn him. He is convinced of judgment.

3. The Holy Spirit leads the awakened sinner into the conviction of his utter helplessness. He does not always see this at the first. He has been in the habit of regarding himself as a moderately good man, with the ability to break off from his sins at his pleasure. Hence, when he becomes awakened, he makes the effort to turn from sin, and to keep God's law, and to make himself a better man. Of course his efforts are all failures. And the more he tries, the more fully does he become aware of his condition; and this leads him to think

that he is really growing worse. At last he awakes to the fact that he is helpless. He is fast bound in the cords of his sins, and he has no strength to loosen himself. He sees himself to be wretched and undone. He is convinced of his helplessness.

4. All this while the sinner has been hearing of Jesus as a Saviour; but he has been unwilling to look to him for salvation: that involves too much. He is not ready to sacrifice the world. He is not ready to give up all his sins. He is not ready to break away from all his ungodly companions. He is not ready to come out and unite in association with God's people. Hence he fights against his convictions. Indeed he has fought the idea that he is such a dreadful sinner, justly condemned of God. He has even tried to banish his religious

impressions. He has laid before his mind multitudes of excuses and pretexts. He has pleaded for delay. He has perhaps avoided Christian friends and absented himself from the house of God, or tried to appease conscience by a more careful attendance upon the means of grace. But at length his disinclination to enter the service of Christ gives way. He has fought his convictions and resisted the Holy Spirit. But his soul is conquered. He is made willing in the day of God's power. It is God that is working in him to will.

A great change is thus going on in the mind and heart. The soul has an entirely new set of views and feelings. It looks upon itself as a poor, miserable, helpless sinner, justly condemned of God; and it is willing to do any thing that God may require. The soul is in

a new state. Is it in the Christian state?
It is,—

5. The moment it actually trusts in Jesus as a personal Saviour. Nothing short of this amounts to complete conversion. And just here it is all-important to understand the relation of Jesus to the work of our salvation.

There are two great difficulties in the way of our salvation,—the one is legal, the other is moral. The one grows out of the fact that we have broken God's law, and the other grows out of the fact that our hearts are polluted with sin. We have broken the law, and hence it utters its dreadful curse against us, saying that we must die; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) "For the wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.)

We are also defiled within; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John iii. 6.) "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." (Eccles. ix. 3.)

Now, Jesus meets and removes both these difficulties for those who are willing to trust him and give themselves to him. For (1.) He assumed our place under the law, and as our substitute kept its precepts and suffered its penalty. So that he is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x. 4.) Righteousness is what the law demands, and that is perfect obedience. And Jesus rendered this. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." (Heb. vii. 26.) "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (1 Pet. ii.

22.) He also suffered the penalty of the law for us:—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. iii. 13.) "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Pet. ii. 24.) We owed ten thousand talents: Jesus has paid all the debt. For our numerous sins we deserved ten thousand stripes: Jesus has received them all in his own body. The law demanded blood of us, in pealing thunder uttering its curse that we must die: Jesus gave his life on the cross, baring his breast to the sword of eternal justice. But (2.) Jesus, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, purifies our hearts, and thus fits us for heaven. This work of freeing us from the pollutions of sin and making us perfect is a gradual work. It begins with our conversion, and continues throughout the

period of our earthly pilgrimage. The new heart is the beginning of the great work of our sanctification.

The two great blessings that we need at the outset are the removal of the sentence of the law, or pardon, and the new heart. We want the curse of the law removed, so that we will no longer be under condemnation and in danger of suffering its fearful penalty; and we want the new birth into the family of God, so that we may be reckoned among his children.

Of course these two blessings always go together and can never be separated. God does not pardon our sins without the new heart; he does not give us the new heart and yet leave us unforgiven. The two are bound together as golden links that can never be severed. If the soul has one, it knows that the other

exists along with it. In this way we tell that our sins are all forgiven and the whole curse of the law removed from us. God does not speak from heaven with an audible voice, informing us of our pardon; but he bestows the new heart, and that is the proof that the curse of the law is taken away. If you have the new heart, then you know that your sins are all blotted out. And do you now ask me what is the new heart, and how you can tell when you have got it? I answer, "The new heart is a heart trusting in Jesus as a personal Saviour:—'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.' (1 John v. 1.) Whosoever believeth (*i.e.* whosoever trusts in Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah, as the soul's personal Saviour), is born of God, has the new birth into the family of God, has the heart of a child of God."

“But does not the Bible say a great deal about repentance, and is not that one of the first commands, ‘Repent ye’?”

“Of course. He who trusts in Jesus trusts in him as a Saviour from sin. Repentance is a turning from sin with the whole heart. The angels have no sins to turn from, and hence have no need of a Saviour. So that the very fact of trusting in Jesus necessarily implies repentance. Only those who are mourning over their sins and trying to escape from them can trust in Jesus.”

“But does not the Bible say a great deal also about love for Jesus,—loving him with all the heart?” “Of course. If your eyes have been opened to see your wretched condition in sin, and you have fled to Jesus for refuge, you cannot help loving him. You naturally love those in whom you have great con-

fidence. And more especially Jesus; for he loves you, he has died for you, he forgives all your sins, he purifies your heart, he defends you from your spiritual foes, and he conducts you home to heaven. But you cannot love Jesus until after you trust him. You cannot love those in whom you have no confidence, or towards whom you have a feeling of indifference. If you really trust in Jesus as your Saviour, love for him will necessarily spring up in the heart."

"But how about obedience?" "Well, if you are trying to escape from your sins, and are trusting in Jesus, and your soul is beginning to love him, these feelings will all prompt you to make the effort to keep his commandments. You will feel that Jesus has done so much for you, that now you must try and do

all you can to please him. You will feel, with Saul of Tarsus, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ (Acts ix. 6.) You are his, soul and body, bought with his blood, and you must live for him. You must observe all his precepts:— ‘If a man love me, he will keep my words.’ (John xiv. 23.) Those whom you love and to whom you are under great obligations, you will acknowledge, you should endeavour to please. Now, it will please Jesus and show your love for him, for you to break off from all sin, to seek frequent communion with him in the study of the Scriptures and prayer, to come out openly before the world and confess his name and identify yourself with his people, to frequent his house and participate in all the ordinances of public worship, and to labour to build up his cause and save perishing

sinners. And if you are really trusting Jesus as a personal Saviour, and feel any glow of love in your soul, you will be willing to enter upon such a course of life."

This, then, is the new heart. It is the soul that has made the discovery of its wretched condition in sin; that, giving up all its vain excuses and all its vain efforts, has trusted in Jesus for deliverance; and now trusting in him, it is willing to be his, to put itself under his authority and direction, and to be guided by him in all things. This new state of things has been brought about by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth. The soul itself has opposed, and resisted, and begged to be excused from the very outset. But the Spirit has urged its entreaties and sweetly constrained, until at last the

soul has laid down all opposition and willingly trusted in Jesus and taken up his service. "Do you think, Sammy," said a pastor to a poor, simple-minded man who presented himself, during a time of revival, to the officers of the church, seeking admission to the visible kingdom of our Lord,—“do you think, Sammy, that you have been born again?” “I think I have,” was the answer. “Well, if so,” said the minister, “whose work is that?” “Oh, God did a part, and I did a part.” “Ah, what part did you do, Sammy?” “Why, I opposed God all I could, and he did the rest.” Yes, the new heart is truly the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this gift is accompanied with that other great blessing,—the pardon of our sins:—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” (John iii. 36.) “He that believeth

on him is not condemned" (John iii. 18), "but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.) The curse of the law is removed, the sentence of death no longer hangs over him, and he has eternal life bestowed upon him. The moment the sinner trusts Jesus as a personal Saviour, that moment his sins are all forgiven, and his name is written in the book of life.

And such is the witness of the Spirit. It is not a voice from heaven, nor some supernatural vision or impression. It is his work in the soul, bringing it to see its wretched condition in sin, persuading and enabling it to trust in Jesus, and with a willing heart to take up his service. He thus bears witness by his work. The testimony is silent; the Holy Spirit has quietly led the soul away from sin and danger to Jesus

Christ; but yet the evidence is real and abiding.

And this testimony increases in clearness and fulness as Christians advance in the divine life. The Holy Spirit first gives the new heart, which is simply a heart trusting in Jesus. He then follows this up with the work of making the heart pure.

1. We are led by the Spirit more and more into a knowledge of the whole truth (John xvi. 13). We learn more of God's law,—its spirituality and the extent of its demands. We learn more about sin,—what things are sinful, and the loathsomeness of all sin, and the extent of our personal sinfulness. We learn more about Jesus,—his person, as the God manifest in the flesh; his work,—as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

2. Our spiritual feelings become more

manifest to our consciousness. We have more of godly sorrow on account of sin. Our faith grows stronger, our love more fervent, our humility deeper. We have stronger aspirations after holiness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and longing to be transformed into the image of Christ.

3. Our endeavours after obedience also are greater. Religion must show itself in the life. The new-born babe declares its inward life by its cries and the efforts to move its limbs and body. The new-born soul in Christ declares its spiritual life by its earnest cries after Jesus and its efforts to move itself in obedience to his commandments. He who has Christ in his heart will walk, to some extent at least, under the direction of Christ. He is led by the Spirit.

Religion consists of right knowledge,

right feeling, and right action. It is a right head, a right heart, a right life. As the Christian makes progress in the divine life, his mind becomes more fully enlightened, his heart more fully sanctified, and his life more completely conformed to the will of God. And this work of enlightening our minds and purifying our hearts is the Spirit's work, and is his constant testimony to our acceptance with God. He leads us into a clearer perception and fuller understanding of divine truth, into a more complete exercise of all spiritual emotions, and, in the conduct of life, into a nearer compliance with all the precepts of Christ.

This is all clear, simple, and easily understood. He who trusts in Jesus as a personal Saviour has the new heart. The new heart is a child's heart: so

that he who has the new heart is a child of God. And every child of God is pardoned; his sins are all forgiven, and the whole curse of the law is taken away.

DIFFICULTIES SOLVED.

But still there are difficulties with which many are perplexed; and these difficulties often fill the soul with anxious doubts and fears.

I. Many are troubled because they cannot secure that wonderful manifestation for which they were looking. They have been led to believe that religion is some great mystery, and that in conversion there will be a sudden unfolding or revelation of the mystery. Now, there is a change, and a very great change, at the time of conversion. The Holy Spirit leads the soul into a state

of concern, of conviction of sin and helplessness, of willingness to forsake sin and embrace Jesus, and of actual trust in Christ. The soul can undergo no greater and no more important change than this. It is a great change for you to give up your prejudice against a fellow-man and begin to trust and love him. It is the greatest of all changes for you to give up your confidence in the world and your love for it, and to turn and bestow your confidence and your love upon Jesus Christ. And this great change which takes place in the soul is conversion. It may not be as you expected. It may seem too simple. But that is all there is of it, and you must be satisfied with it.

II. It may be a trouble to some that they have not had a conscious experience of the change which we term

conversion or regeneration. They have been brought up by pious parents in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and they cannot remember the time when they did not pray to Jesus with real trust in him. But this should give them no trouble. Samuel was lent to the Lord from his infancy, and John the Baptist was sanctified from the womb. I have no doubt but that the children of pious parents are often thus sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Their hearts are changed in infancy or early childhood, and as soon as they begin to learn about Jesus they turn to him with confidence and love. Be not troubled, therefore. You mourn over your sins, and look to Jesus for deliverance from them. You trust in Jesus as a personal Saviour. You love him. You love his people and his service. You are trying to run in

the way of his commandments. The Spirit is engaged in the blessed work of sanctifying your heart; and it should be a matter of great rejoicing to you that he began the work when you were a little child. "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. vii. 20.) Are the fruits of right views, right feelings, and right actions showing themselves in your heart and life? If so, you have the witness of the Spirit; and that is all you need care to know.

III. Many trouble themselves because they cannot tell the time of their new birth. But in this respect there is a great variety of experience. Some are suddenly arrested in their career of sin, and are immediately converted to God, like the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. The whole change, from the moment of first concern to that of con-

secration to Christ, is limited by the space of a few hours; and such persons can always celebrate the day of their new birth. With vast multitudes, however, the change, in some of its parts at least, is more gradual. Their anxious concern comes on gradually, and lasts for days, or months, or even years. They struggle long with their convictions. They read the Bible and pray, and perhaps seek Christian counsel. The light begins to break in upon their souls; but at the first it is so dim that they cannot tell when they first saw it. We can never tell the precise moment when day begins to dawn. No babe can tell the hour when its eyes first opened upon the light of day.

A large proportion of anxious persons do not understand what are the evidences of our acceptance with God.

Hence they are looking for something which God has not promised to bestow in conversion; and it is often days, sometimes months and years, after the change has taken place, before they can be made to understand that that is the new birth.

For these and other reasons, it seems probable that very few persons can tell the time of their conversion. But this need give you no trouble. The Bible does not say that you must know the day and the hour when the Holy Spirit gave you a new heart. The great question is, Have you got the new heart? The gift may have come in so quietly and been laid down so gently that you did not know it for a considerable time.

IV. Many are troubled because they are so imperfect after conversion, and find themselves so little able to keep

Christ's commandments. Perhaps most persons, struggling with their sins in their days of anxious concern, have the impression that after conversion they will be almost perfect. They mistake their own strength and God's plan. A new heart is not a pure heart. A new heart is simply the old heart with the little germ of grace planted in it. The old heart is a field overgrown with weeds and thorn-bushes. When the farmer goes forth to plant the corn, he first cuts down the weeds and briers, and burns them. He makes the ground clean and breaks it up, and then plants the good seed. God does not so with the human heart. He inserts the little plant of his grace right in the midst of the tall and evil weeds of wrong thoughts and tempers and passions. The young plant of faith looks small and tender beside those

evil things that for years have been growing in the soil of the heart. But the young Christian was not expecting this. He thought religion would be the chief thing in his soul, and sin the least. Hence he is surprised, disappointed, and even grows despondent, and perhaps imagines that his change was not real and his conversion not genuine. Religion in the soul is at first a little plant. God says to the young Christian, "Go to work, and I will help you. Watch over the plant of grace. Cultivate it by prayer, and the study of the Scriptures, and all appointed religious exercises, and my Spirit will be present to make it grow. Labour likewise to destroy all the evil that is within you. Cut down and root out all the evil weeds of wrong thoughts and tempers and passions; and as you work the Spirit will help you,

and gradually grace will grow and sin die out." "In many things we offend all." (James iii. 2.) "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. v. 17.)

V. It troubles many that their convictions of sin are not as deep and pungent as they think they ought to be. But in this you may be measuring your experience by that of somebody else, and not testing it by the truth of the Bible. The Holy Spirit does seem to lead some persons through the very deepest portions of the "slough of despond," and their convictions of sin are almost overwhelming. But others are treated differently. Now, what is common to all who are truly led by the

Spirit is this :—they are convinced that they are sinners and in need of Jesus as a Saviour. Are you satisfied that you are a helpless sinner, and are you trusting in Jesus, and in Jesus alone, as your Saviour? If so, then you must be in a saved condition. You will not turn to Jesus and trust him unless you feel your need of him. Now, your feeling may not be as strong as you think it ought to be; but is it strong enough to make you act? If it is, if impelled by it you have gone to the cross and cried for mercy, then you have done what God requires. You see that you are a sinner and that your soul is in peril, and, seeing this, you have fled to Jesus for refuge. You are at the cross, and you find there multitudes of others. Some of these may manifest a deeper feeling, a higher degree of excitement, may shed more

tears, than you. But you are all at the cross. You have all come there for the same purpose,—viz. to secure deliverance from sin. You all call on Jesus for mercy. You all trust in him. And now Jesus says, “Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.” (John vi. 37.) He does not say those who have the most pungent convictions of sin and those who weep the most, but those who come to him, those who trust him, those who see their need of him and call on him for mercy.

VI. Some are troubled because they do not make progress in the divine life. They complain that they are not growing Christians, and therefore fear that they may not be Christians at all.

1. On this point some are doubtless mistaken. The Holy Spirit gives them wonderfully clear views of sin. They

are learning more of the amazing reach of God's law. Their views of what constitutes sin are becoming more accurate. Their consciences are growing more tender and more sensitive to that which is wrong. The light of God in their souls is daily increasing in brightness, so that they see more of their own depravity. Such persons often think they are growing worse, when in reality their hatred to sin is becoming more intense and their desires after holiness deeper and stronger. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matt. v. 6.) If you are conscious of such a thirst for holiness, you must be a child of God; for no impenitent sinner can have such a feeling.

Still there are multitudes who do make little or no progress in the divine

life. They are not growing in conformity to the image and will of their blessed Lord. Now,—

2. Some do not grow in grace for the reason that they are looking too exclusively within. They are all the time meditating on themselves, contemplating their own imperfections of heart and life. The hungry man will not get rid of his hunger if he sits down and mourns over his hunger and does not eat the food that is set before him. The sick man will not get well if he does nothing but think of his disease and does not apply to the physician and use the proper remedies. Very many Christians are hungering for the bread of life; but they do nothing but mourn over their hunger and weakness, and do not really partake of the divine bread given them in the gospel. They are sick at heart

with their sins; but they sit down and mourn and weep all their days, and do not look up to Jesus, the great Physician of souls. If you desire to grow in grace, look away from yourself all the time to Jesus:—"We all, with open (*i.e.* unveiled) face beholding as in a glass (*i.e.* mirror or looking-glass) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) The Scriptures are a looking-glass in which is seen the image of the Lord Jesus; and those who constantly and intently gaze upon that glorious image are changed by the Holy Spirit into the same likeness.

3. Some do not grow in grace because they are not wholly consecrated to Christ. Very many seem to seek connection with Christ and his church simply as a means

of personal deliverance from the dangers to which they are exposed in sin. Some such persons do, no doubt, really give their hearts to Jesus. They actually trust in him as a Saviour; but they seem to have no proper conception of their infinite obligations to him or of the extent of his requirements. Hence they seem to think it enough if they read the Bible sometimes, and pray once or twice a day, and attend church whenever convenient, and partake of the Lord's Supper. They are not really and wholly consecrated to their Master and his cause. They do not feel that their souls and bodies and property all belong to Christ, and are to be employed for the promotion of his glory. They cannot take up their crosses and deny themselves. They cannot go about doing good, labouring to promote the temporal

and spiritual welfare of their fellow-men. Of course, where there is such a want of consecration, there can be no progress. Children grow by means of wholesome food and healthful exercise. Christians grow when they feed their souls daily on the milk and bread of the word, and exercise their souls in religious services and doing good. If you give your child but little food, and permit it to take no exercise, it will be but a sickly, delicate child as long as it lives. Multitudes of Christians remain spiritual babes to the day of their death, because they neglect the scriptural food and spiritual exercise.

4. Some do not make progress because they are habitually indulging in known sin. This is really but another way of stating what is considered under the foregoing head. Those not fully

consecrated to Christ are living in constant sin. They are neglecting Christ's commands. They are consulting their own ease or pleasure or worldly advantage. They are indulging in a worldly spirit and leading a worldly life. They neglect their closets and their family religious duties. They stay away from the prayer-meeting and take no part in the Sabbath-school. They make no effort to build up Christ's cause and save souls. In these and other ways they quench and grieve the Holy Spirit. "Quench not the Spirit." (1 Thess. v. 19.) "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv. 30.)

5. Some are timidly refusing to take up the entire service of Christ. They know what all his commands are; but they select for themselves those which

they will keep, and the rest they will not comply with.

Very many anxious inquirers are in this condition. They are very willing to serve Christ secretly, observing all their private religious duties; but they plead that they are not good enough to come out before the world and openly confess his name and identify themselves with his people.

Many professors of religion likewise decline to take up their whole duty. They cannot pray in their families or in the prayer-meeting. They cannot labour personally to bring sinners to Christ. And they excuse themselves on the ground of natural timidity or a conscious want of qualification.

The difficulty in almost all such cases is a want of entire consecration to Christ and a want of faith. Of course we have

no right to select between Christ's commands. He has given them to us, and our simple duty is to try, and keep on trying, to keep them all. Perseverance in trying is indeed our main duty; for that shows that the intention of the heart is right. Jesus has promised to help those who rely on him. If, therefore, you are selecting between Christ's commands, you are doing that which is exceedingly displeasing in his sight and must grieve the Holy Spirit.

6. Some do not make progress in grace because they are endeavouring to sanctify themselves by their own works. They feel that they cannot do any thing to make amends for their transgressions. It is only the blood of the cross that can atone for their sins. But in the matter of getting their hearts purified from sin they make a great and serious mistake.

Now, purity of heart comes just as much by faith as does pardon. We trust Jesus for pardon; so do we trust him for sanctification.

“But does not the Lord require us to work out our own salvation, and to make a diligent use of all the means of grace? I try to do this. I read the Bible, and pray, and attend prayer-meeting and church, and labour to build up the cause of Christ; and yet I do not grow in grace.”

“Yes; you may do all this, and never make much progress, because you may be trusting in the work you do and resting in the mere outward means. You can never pay Jesus for what he has done for you in pardoning your sins and giving you a new heart; and no more can you by your works buy of him a pure heart and a home in heaven. You

can no more make your heart pure by your own works than at the first you can give yourself a new heart. From beginning to end salvation is all the gift of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. But then Jesus desires to see the fruits of his grace within us. We are under infinite obligations to him; and if we have in our hearts the slightest measure of love and gratitude, these will prompt us to do all we can to please him. And he has told us in his word what will please him. And if we set out to try to please him, by cheerfully doing what he tells us, he will bestow more and more grace. As you run along the pathway of obedience to his commandments, he will by his Spirit carry on the work of purifying your heart. It is not prayer, or any religious exercise or work, that of itself will make you any better.

The work of purifying your heart is the work of the Holy Spirit: so that you trust for your sanctification just as much as for the pardon of your sins and the removal of the curse of the law."

VII. Many are troubled because they have so little spiritual comfort and joy. "I try to be diligent in the use of the means of grace; but I have very little spiritual comfort. The Bible says a great deal about the joys of the saints, and even calls them unspeakable and full of glory; but such is not my experience."

1. Too many Christians are in the habit of seeking joy as a mere end. They engage in their closet devotions, and attend the prayer-meeting and church, that they may feel happy; and they think that they secure no benefit from the services if they do not carry

away with them this feeling. But this is a wrong view to take of the matter. We belong to Jesus, and are under infinite obligations to him; and the great motive that should control us in all the conduct of life is the desire to please our Lord. We should rise above all considerations of self, and engage in all religious services and work, out of pure regard to the will of the Master; and if you do this, he will give you the comforts of religion and all proper spiritual joy. When you seek joy as an end in the service of Christ, you do not obtain it. No child that loves its mother will strive to please that mother simply that it may feel happy itself. If the child forgets itself, and from pure love endeavours to conform to the mother's wishes, it will be happy in its obedience. If you go to the closet and the prayer-meeting

that you may feel good, you are controlled by a selfish feeling, and selfishness always begets more or less of discomfort, if not of positive misery. But when you forget self, and strive to please Jesus, by running in the way of his commandments, then he makes you happy.

2. Too many Christians are all the time looking at themselves, and, of course, the view is any thing but a pleasing one. When beholding a person upon a sick-bed and writhing in pain, or when looking upon evidences of poverty and sin, or contemplating the ruins that fire and sword may have made in a ravaged city, you necessarily feel sad: so a constant view of self—all the time looking upon the corruptions and imperfections of our hearts and lives—must give us sorrowful feelings.

Happy Christians are those who lose sight of themselves in the contemplation of Jesus !

3. Too many Christians neglect heavenly contemplation. This is one great source of spiritual joy. If you go on an eminence, and there, forgetting all your cares and sorrows, become rapt in the view of a beautiful landscape all instinct with joyous life, your soul will rise and swell with emotions of beauty until you seem lifted out of your former state and elevated to a new world. And so, if every day you will retire to some private place, and there by prayer and meditation go up on the mount, and in the vision of faith contemplate the glories of heaven, your everlasting home, your soul will become a very well-spring of pleasure, and you will no more complain of your want of spiritual joy.

VIII. It troubles many that their religious feelings are so exceedingly variable and change with such rapidity. Now they are happy, and the next hour they are sad. During the Sabbath services their hearts glow with love and zeal for the Master; but on Monday morning they are cold and lifeless. Well, (1.) Mere frames of spirit are not religion. Religion consists essentially in an abiding trust in Jesus as a personal Saviour; and this faith the true Christian never loses from his soul. He may lose spiritual comfort and peace; he may fall into sadness, and even despondency; but there is always left faith in Jesus. In the darkest hour the soul says, "Jesus is all my trust." The faith may seem weak; but, little as it appears, the soul would not take worlds for it; and that faith, small as it may

seem, is true religion : it is a real bond uniting the soul to Christ.

2. Our frames of spirit are often affected by our bodily health. Headache, dyspepsia, and various other diseases, affect the mind and tend to beget gloomy feelings. The body and the soul are very intimately related to each other, and what affects the one often equally affects the other. Hence many diseases tend to produce depression of spirit : so that religious despondency frequently originates in a diseased body.

3. Our spiritual frames are very much dependent, too, upon our fidelity in the service of Christ. When we are in the actual discharge of duty, we have good frames ; when we are neglecting duty, we lose them. You come to Sabbath-school and church on Sunday, and engage with all your heart in the services

of the sacred day. You draw nigh to the warm heart of Jesus, and exercise your soul in the spiritual services, and thus you are warmed. You are in the line of duty, and Christ rewards you; and you form holy resolutions to serve Jesus all the week out in the world. You purpose to try to win souls for him. But when Monday morning comes, you fail to carry out your resolutions. You live all the week in the neglect of duty, and of course your good frames leave you.

CONCLUSION.

AM I A CHILD OF GOD? You are if you are trusting in Jesus as a personal Saviour. Those who trust in him thus are born of God, have the new heart, and are adopted into God's family. Un-

belief characterizes the old heart in sin; faith characterizes the new heart in Christ. A soul wholly in unbelief is under the curse of the law, and is a child of the evil one. A soul trusting in Jesus is free from the curse of the law, and is a child of God; and the soul that has turned from sin and trusted in Jesus, has been led into this new state by the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit continues to lead the soul into a nearer conformity to Christ's will in views and feelings and conduct. So that those who are trusting in Christ may know that they are converted and pardoned; those becoming more and more conformed to Christ's will may know that they are growing in grace. Conversion and increasing sanctification are the evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit with the soul; for they are the

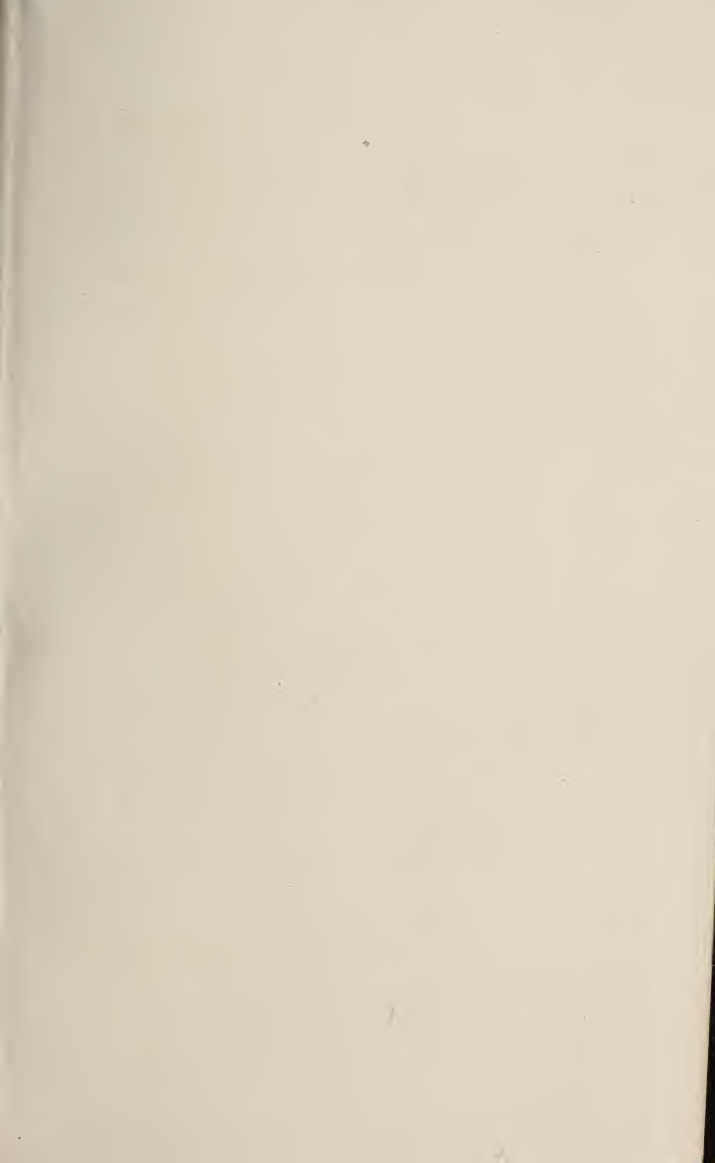
work of the Spirit. And this work is the evidence he gives that our sins are all pardoned and that we are adopted into God's family as his children.

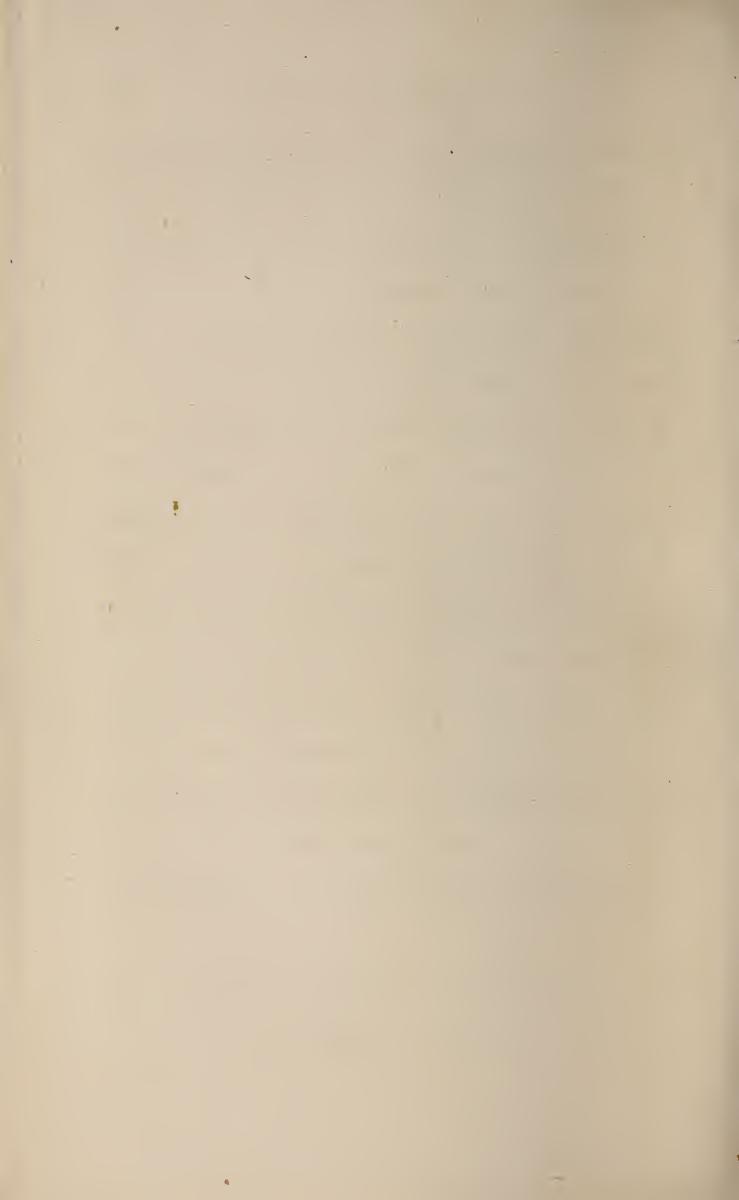
AM I A CHILD OF GOD? If not, then you are a child of the evil one and an heir of perdition. You are under the curse of the law, and, living in sin, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath against the day of wrath. You may say your prayers every day, you may unite with the church, you may come to the communion-table, you may give all your property to feed the poor, but it will all avail you nothing in the day of final account if you are not a child of God through Jesus Christ. Oh, then, believe in Jesus without delay. Flee to him as the only one who can give you security in the coming time of wrath.

AM I A CHILD OF GOD? If so, then

happy are you. Your sins are all forgiven, the Holy Spirit abides with you to sanctify your heart for heaven, and angels daily minister round about you. The Lord is your shade by day and your light by night. He is your strength in weakness and your comfort in sorrow. He guides you by his counsel, and after death will receive you up into glory. And there a rich inheritance awaits you; for if you are a child of God, then you are an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus is the only-begotten Son of the Father, and hence he is the heir of all the universe. So that you have a title to an inheritance vast as the dominions of God.

OH, WHAT A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE TO BE
A CHILD OF GOD!





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